

# Alcohol

## and caring for your baby



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### We know that you want to make sure your baby is cared for as safely as possible.

That's why we advise that there is always a **sober adult** to care for your baby. A sober adult is someone who hasn't drunk any alcohol or taken any recreational drugs.

This is because alcohol affects judgement and reaction times. You need both these skills when caring for your baby.

Not only does alcohol impact on the skills needed to care for your baby, but it might also make you feel more tired by negatively impacting the quality of your sleep. You might find that not drinking alcohol could be a good option for your family, particularly within the first few months whilst your baby is at a vulnerable stage of development.

### Planning ahead

There might be times as a parent or carer when you and/or your partner will be drinking alcohol. This could be at home, at a social get-together, or when staying at friends' or families' houses.

**Planning ahead to have a sober adult around to take care of the baby is a good idea** for those times. You could consider a trusted friend, partner, or a close family member.

This means you can make sure your baby has a carer who can respond to their needs, as alcohol can make this more difficult to do. Alcohol can increase risk-taking behavior and mean that you might make different decisions than those you would usually make. It also means in case of an emergency there is a sober adult there to care for your baby.

You might find it helpful to share the Scottish Government/NHS Scotland leaflet: [Safer Sleep for babies a guide for parents and carers \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot) on safer sleep with them.



## Safer sleep

Planning ahead also means making sure that you are able to follow the Scottish Government/NHS Scotland safer sleep advice.

To reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) the safest place for a baby to sleep is in their own separate, clear, firm, flat sleep space, such as a cot or Moses basket. Scotland's Baby Box has its own safer sleep information.



**It's important that the cot or Moses basket is in the same room as the sober adult looking after your baby.** Babies should always be in the same room as their carer for the first six months for sleep, day and night.



We know that many parents find themselves bed sharing at some point in time, whether they had initially planned to or not. **It is very dangerous to bed share if you have had any alcohol.**

If you have had any alcohol it is very important to put your baby in their own separate sleep space, such as a cot or Moses basket. Planning ahead means this is more likely to happen.

**It is also very dangerous to bed share with your baby if:**

- You or anyone in the bed smokes or the baby was exposed to smoking in pregnancy.
- You or anyone in the bed has taken drugs or medication that make you feel sleepy.
- If your baby was born prematurely (before 37 weeks of pregnancy) or weighed under 2.5kg or 5.5 pounds when they were born.



If you are staying away from home, it's a good idea to use a portable sleep space like a travel cot or carrycot.



**Sofas and armchairs are dangerous places to fall asleep with your baby. The risk of SIDS is 50 times higher for babies when they sleep on a sofa or armchair with an adult.**

## Breastfeeding

- Breastfeeding has many benefits, such as helping protect your baby from infection and lowering the risk of SIDS.
- If you do plan to drink alcohol, you could also consider expressing before you drink any alcohol and use this to feed your baby.
- Expressing your breastmilk will not increase the rate at which alcohol is removed from the milk. This is because the amount of alcohol in your milk will be at the same level as the amount of alcohol in your body.
- For more information on alcohol you can visit: [Alcohol - Healthy Living | NHS inform](#).



## Alcohol intake

It's important that all adults, not only those who are parents or breastfeeding, do not exceed 14 units of alcohol per week

You can find out more about how many units are in different drinks here: [How does my drinking add up | NHS inform](#).

If you are worried about your alcohol intake or want to cut down, we advise that you speak to your health visitor, family nurse or GP. They will be able to support you and provide further information.



## Further resources:

If you want more information on safer sleep, please visit:  
[Safer Sleep for babies a guide for parents and carers \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

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